

2019-2020 Annual Report by Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee

Submitted to:
The Colorado State Board of Education

Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee (CSEAC)
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The Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee
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Background and Purpose of the Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee

The Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee (CSEAC) is a state level committee required by both federal and state law. The establishment of the CSEAC is mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as a condition for the State's eligibility for funding. The CSEAC is established by Colorado's Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA) to assist the State Board of Education in the performance of its responsibilities for the implementation of certain provisions of the ECEA. CSEAC members are interested in the quality of education received by children and youth with disabilities. The committee includes parents of and individuals with disabilities, educational service providers, administrators, and representatives from a variety of related agencies. Participation is statewide and representative of diverse disabilities.

Under IDEA, CSEAC must engage in the following activities:

- Advise the State Educational Agency (SEA) of unmet needs within the State in the education of children with disabilities;
- Comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the State regarding the education of children with disabilities;
- Advise the SEA in developing evaluations and the reporting on data to the U.S. Secretary of Education;
- Advise the SEA in developing corrective-action plans to address findings identified in Federal monitoring reports; and
- Advise the SEA in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities.

CSEAC Vision Statement

All learners are respected and challenged with high expectations, their needs are met, and student aspirations for success are fulfilled.

CSEAC Mission Statement

Our mission is to actively represent children and youth with disabilities and impact decisions made on their behalf to enhance the quality of educational services.

CSEAC Focus in 2019-2020

CSEAC worked to continue to meet its mandate and mission in addition to partnering with the Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU) to develop an improved process for identifying unmet needs of children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and their families. CSEAC continued to work on reaching out to constituents across the state through local Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs) and implemented a streamlined process for gathering input on important issues.

CSEAC Highlights for 2019-2020

During the 2019-2020 school year, the CSEAC participated in the following activities:

- Continued to work on a collaborative process to generate, develop, and communicate CSEAC recommendations on the unmet educational needs of children with disabilities. After the collaborative process – which includes CSEAC members gathering information from constituent groups on an



identified topic – a document is created with comprehensive information and a review of the identified special education issue. The topics included:

- Dispute Resolution;
- General Education, Special Education, Paraprofessional Training and Pay; and
- Inclusive Education and Assistive Technology.
- Served on various committees and groups, including the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR) Leadership Team; CDE Advisory Group on Early Dispute Resolution; Preschool Special Education Advisory Committee; specific disability organizations; and local SEACs.
- Received updates from ESSU’s Executive Director regarding the performance of Colorado students and the State’s performance on program indicators required by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).
- Planned and held numerous successful local SEAC Forums/Workshops. Topics included:
 - What is happening at the local SEAC level?
 - Sharing of best practices.
- Attended Colorado State Board of Education meetings.
- Reviewed updates from Colorado’s Due Process Decisions and State Complaints.
- Received legislative updates from the State Board of Education Liaison.
- Received updates and presentations on the following topics:
 - Dispute Resolution Data and Trends – Candace Hawkins, Esq., Director, General Supervision and Monitoring, ESSU, CDE
 - Adapted PE Standards and Updates – Bryan Wickoren, Adapted Physical Education Specialist, ESSU, CDE
 - Family Support Services Program (FSSP): Updates to the State Handbook – Lindsay Westlund, HCBS Benefits Specialist Lead, Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing (HCPF); Courtney Montes, HCBS Benefits Specialist, HCPF
 - Extended Evidence Outcomes (EEOs) – Gina Herrera, Supervisor, Access, Learning and Literacy and Significant Support Needs and Deaf Blindness Specialist, ESSU, CDE
 - Alternative Dispute Resolution Updates and Trends – Dr. Mary Anne Fleury, Alternative Dispute Resolution Specialist, ESSU, CDE
 - State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Plan (APP) - Dr. Miki Imura, Supervisor of Data Accountability and Achievement, ESSU, CDE
 - Updates and Outcomes from the January Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP) Conference – CSEAC Members: Shelly Agostine, Aimee Guildner, Anna Stewart
 - Mental Health and Affective Needs Updates in Colorado Schools – Bill Brown, Affective Needs Specialist, ESSU, CDE
 - Assistive Technology (AT) in Colorado – Tanni Anthony, Director, Access, Learning and Literacy, ESSU, CDE



CSEAC continues to build working relationships with CDE, the State Board of Education, the Colorado General Assembly, statewide special education directors and educators, local SEACs, families, agencies, and other partners in special education.

CSEAC Subcommittee Activities for 2019-2020

The CSEAC had four subcommittees to accomplish its charge: (1) Communications, (2) Membership, (3) Public Policy and Legislation, and (4) Student Outcomes.

CSEAC Subcommittees worked diligently on the following priorities:

- Aligned and provided input on legislation and contributed to CDE rulemaking;
- Strengthened relationships between CSEAC, communities and other stakeholders; Promoted “People First” philosophy and language statewide; and Increased the number of local SEACs, supported existing ones, and worked to build grassroots family and school partnering in special education.

Subcommittee Name: Communications

- Purpose:
 - Facilitate communication with local SEACs through workshops, consultations, surveys and with ESSU.
- Goals:
 - Increase involvement by special education directors, staff, and parents in local SEACs
 - Support AUs in developing and executing action plans for starting or growing a SEAC
 - Increase two-way communication with local SEACs and CSEAC
 - Increase participation, presentations, conversations, etc. about local SEACs at CSEAC
- Members: Shelly Cesana-Agostine, Rebecca Hall, Cassie Sudbeck
 - Co-Chairs: Aimee Guildner, Anna Stewart
- Accomplishments:
 - Sent letter to all special education directors promoting local SEACs
 - Offered two break-out presentations to directors at the annual State Directors meeting
 - Sent our Google survey to special education/SEAC coordinators to determine needs and strengths across state
 - Included follow up with directors/coordinators who indicated interest
 - Presented “Growing Your SEAC” workshop in Colorado Springs with 5 districts
 - Held multiple phone consultations with special education directors and/or parents across state by request

Subcommittee Name: Membership

- Purpose:
 - Solicit, interview, and recommend individuals for membership based on the notice of vacancies prepared and sent each year
- Goals:
 - Obtain applicants, interview, and recommend new committee members to the State Board of Education
 - Finalize membership announcement for CDE and CSEAC dissemination
 - Conduct outreach to new members and first-time members



- Members: Irwin Faaiu, Ray Merenstein, Erika Walker, Jennifer Wilger
 - Co-Chairs: Nicole Dallek, Laurie Ditterline
- Accomplishments:
 - Recruited prospective members from Colorado communities and underrepresented districts
 - Reviewed interview questions for prospective members
 - Interviewed prospective members
 - Paired current membership subcommittee members with new members for mentoring
 - Contacted members not attending to determine if these members had a continued interest in serving on CSEAC

Subcommittee Name: Public Policy and Legislation

- Purpose:
 - Stay abreast of public policy and legislation in the state of Colorado that affect outcomes of students with disabilities
- Goals:
 - Stay current on relevant legislation and inform CSEAC members
 - Review bylaws
 - Ensure CSEAC representation at State Board of Education meetings
- Members: Amy Dobronyi, Amy Rosengrants-Smith, Amanda Summers
 - Co-Chairs: Nicole Gross, Liesel Thomas
- Accomplishments:
 - Monitored current proposed legislation and coordinated with the State Board of Education Liaison
 - Reviewed bylaws, no changes were proposed at this time
 - Communicated relevant legislation to CSEAC members and local SEACs

Subcommittee Name: Student Outcomes

- Purpose:
 - Provide advisement to the CDE on the development and implementation of the Colorado Special Education State Performance Plan
 - Provide advice to the CDE that will help improve the academic achievement of students with disabilities
- Goals:
 - Address disproportionality in graduation rates for students with disabilities and trends in the data with the implementation of the 2021 graduation guidelines
 - Evaluate new graduation guidelines and their impact on students with disabilities
- Members: Heather Alderman, Heidi Graber, Ann Wilson
 - Co-Chairs: Heather Alderman, Heidi Graber, Ann Wilson
- Accomplishments:
 - Became familiar with state level social emotional learning programs looking for research-based approaches to keeping kids in school
 - Explored tools used by local districts to address social emotional learning, connectedness, and supports needed for students with disabilities



- Encouraged the use of PEAK Parent Center for supporting families with transition planning
- Supported career readiness programs used by districts that incorporate local employment options and internships

Looking Ahead

As CSEAC reflects on its work from 2019-2020 and looks forward to 2020-2021, it has identified the following priorities:

- CSEAC will work with CDE on the “unmet needs” of students with IEPs.
- CSEAC will continue to develop constituent input documents on specific special education topics and share these with the State Board of Education, CDE, local SEACs, families and other constituent groups.
- CSEAC will continue to provide resources and support to engage families at the local SEAC/school district level across the state.
- CSEAC will encourage continued support of the Results Driven Accountability (RDA) process to monitor the results of students with disabilities on statewide standardized testing, including tracking the achievement and progress of these students from year to year.
- CSEAC will continue to urge meaningful transition planning and options to increase student graduation rates and improve postsecondary outcomes – including employment – for students with disabilities.
- CSEAC will continue to review and update its publications.

CSEAC Members in 2019-2020

Name	Role	County	Congressional District
Shelly Agostine	Parent of a Child with a Disability	El Paso	5th
Heather Alderman	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Larimer	2nd
Jill Choate	Representative from an Institution of Higher Education	La Plata	3rd
Carisa Clinton, 2018-20 Co-Chair	Representative from an Organization Concerned with the Provision of Transition Services	Larimer	2nd
Nicole Dallek	Special Education Teacher	Denver	1st
Laurie Ditterline	McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act	Denver	1st
Amy Dobronyi	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Douglas	6th



Irwin Faaiu	Representative from the Division of Youth Services	Douglas	4th
Lynn Fisher	Administrator of a Program for Students with Disabilities	Jefferson	2nd
Heidi Graber	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Larimer	2nd
Tom Gribble	Special Education Administrator	Larimer	2nd
Nicole Gross	Parent of a Child with a Disability	El Paso	5th
Aimee Guildner, 2020-22 Co-Chair Elect	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Jefferson	7th
Rebecca Hall	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Hinsdale	3rd
Sydney Johnston	Special Education Administrator	Denver	1st
Ray Merenstein	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Denver	1st
Amy Rosengrants-Smith	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Prowers	4th
Anna Stewart	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Boulder	2nd
Cassie Sudbeck	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Denver	1st
Amanda Summers	General Education Administrator	Jefferson	7th
Tracy Thatcher, 2019-21 Co-Chair	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Pueblo	3rd
Liesel Thomas	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Adams	7th
Erika Walker	Parent of a Child with a Disability	Denver	1st
Jennifer Wilger	Private School Administrator	Boulder	2nd
Ann Wilson	Representative from the Parent Training and Information Center	Denver	1st



New CSEAC Members for 2020-2021

The following new members were appointed by the Colorado State Board of Education and joined CSEAC in July 2020:

- Shannon Atwater – representing district charter schools (6th Congressional District);
- Kelly Balderston – representing the Division of Youth Services (6th Congressional District);
- Betsy Basch – representing special education administrators (4th Congressional District);
- Rachael Browning – representing special education administrators (6th Congressional District);
- Michel Friberg – representing parents of children with disabilities (6th Congressional District);
- Samantha Hollister – representing parents of children with disabilities (5th Congressional District);
- Jill Pidcock – representing parents of children with disabilities (3rd Congressional District);
- Kaegan Smith – representing individuals with a disability (2nd Congressional District);
- Shelli Tillery – representing parents of children with disabilities (7th Congressional District); and
- Kate Tshikalu-John – representing parents of children with disabilities (5th Congressional District).

Schedule of CSEAC Meetings for 2020-2021

- August 26, 2020
- September 17, 2020
- November 19, 2020
- February 17, 2021
- April 22, 2021
- July 15-16, 2021 (Planning Meeting)

Additional Information and CSEAC Contacts

[Click here for more information about CSEAC](#), or contact one of the following individuals:



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